

## Out of our expectations

*Interview with Alva Noë*

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**What is your favourite object of contemplation: a tomato or a bottle? Both of them come from your writing.**

Well, I do like the tomato, better than the bottle. And I like it because it's an imperfect object, it's a natural object. To describe a form of the tomato is not a trivial matter, you know. And of course every tomato is different from every other tomato. I think the reason that I was first drawn to the tomato as an example is because of the role that tomato plays in history of analytic philosophy. There is a series of writers, who have chosen the tomato as the example – one of the people I have in mind that have done that was Thompson Clark, who may not be well known to you. He is rather neglected American philosopher of perception. He was actually here at this university, at Berkeley, where I am. I've never met him; he's still alive, but doesn't come to campus. He wrote a paper in which the tomato figures very prominently. And there are others, like H. H. Price, and A. J. Ayer, and J. L. Austin, so I've sort of been drawn to the tomato, because it has a kind of canonical status. One of the troubles of course is, that the tomato is just an object of contemplation, at least as I use it. And one wonders, if one has been inspired by phenomenology, whether *contemplation* is exactly the state that we ought to be thinking about, if we are interested in perceptual consciousness.

**Are you an externalist phenomenologist? Can you see any inconsistency between externalism and phenomenology?**

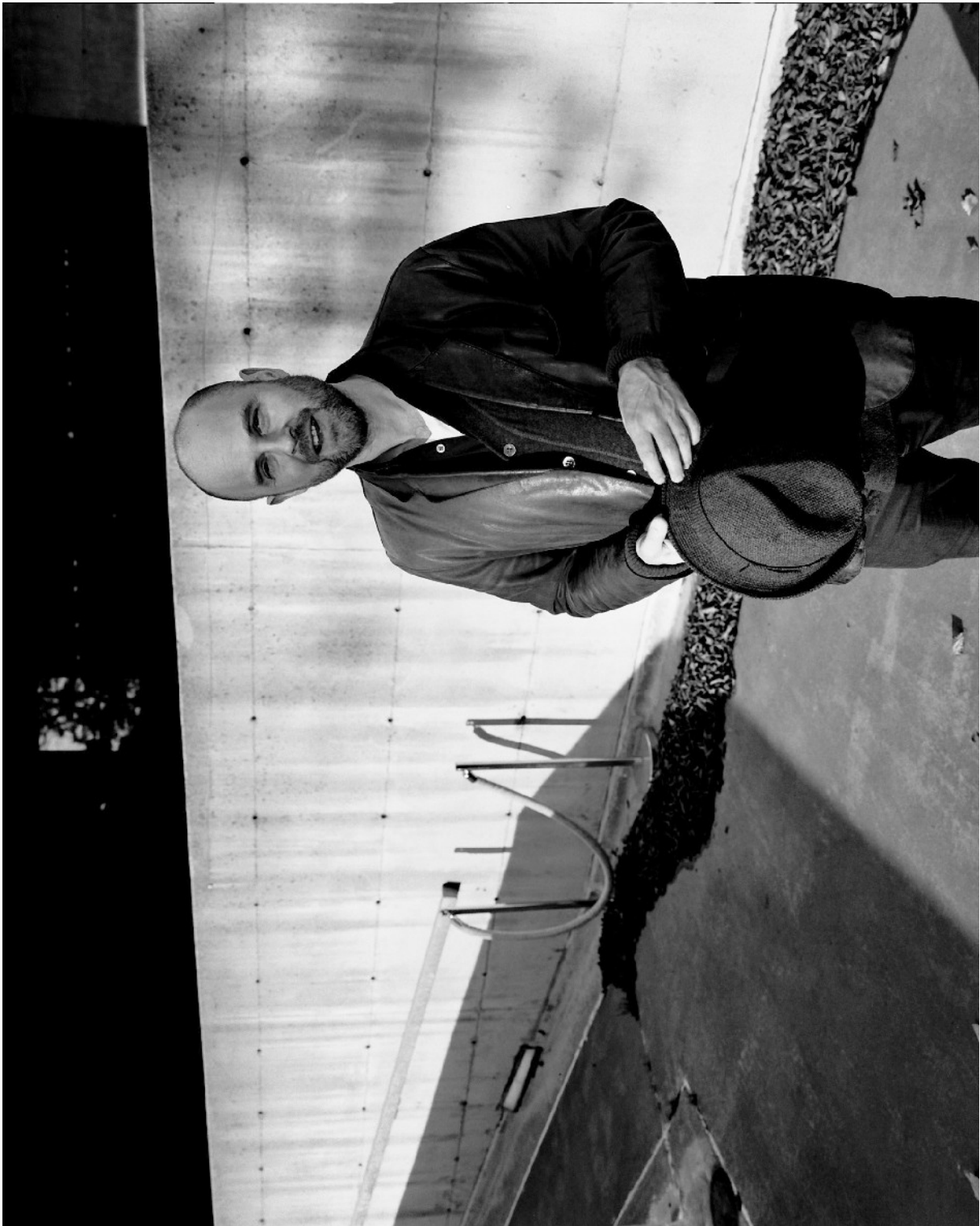
That's a great question. It's interesting that in biology it's obvious that the way the organism is put together is critically important for the organism's life, that the way the organism fits into an ecological niche is no less central to the performance of and to the fulfillment of biological functions. You don't have biologists saying 'No, actually, all

that matters for life is localized *inside* the organism' or 'No, actually, all that matters for life is also localized *outside* the organism'. But I want to say that we really should be thinking of human experience on the model of life itself, and when you do that the internalism/externalism terminology sort of doesn't seem very important. It seems to be a little bit of a relic of our philosophical tradition that we needn't concern ourselves with any more. If I were an engineer, if I were a mad scientist – if I were the Dr Frankenstein and I was trying to build the life form – I guess it's reasonable to think that in my first steps I would think about the entity I was building. But I would very quickly have to think about the environment in which I expected my life form to exist. So Dr Frankenstein would have to actually be making not just an artificial life but he would be making an artificial life and artificial world.

One last comment as an answer to you – one of the ideas I work with is the idea that experience itself is something that we enact, something that we perform, something that we achieve, it is something that we carry out. Now, there always have been a puzzle about how we can do phenomenology. There's many different ways of appreciating the puzzle. There's John Paul Sartre's idea that when I look at myself, when I reflect on myself having an experience, I thereby alter the experience. Take the example of reading. When I read, and I am absorbed, then it is impossible for me to pay attention to what I am doing. After all, I am absorbed in the content. And by the same token, if I do shift my attention to what I am doing, to the reading task itself, I'll interrupt the reading. Sartre was impressed that the consciousness of reading reduces to nothingness while one is engaged in the task. But then how can I reflect on my experience if – when I do so – I destroy the experience. Which is just another way of asking: how is phenomenology possible?

Or consider a different line of skepticism about possibility of investigating experience itself. This observation of G. E. Moore, H. P. Grice and others that experience has a kind of transparency: that when I reflect on what I'm seeing, what I end up reflecting on, necessarily, is what I am seeing, not my experience of seeing it. The experience itself seems to be transparent and so immune to direct observation.

And then of course there is an introspection. What is introspection? How does introspection work? Who knows! What criteria of accuracy or success are there when it comes to introspection? And that's just the problem. There are none. Introspection does not seem to provide intersubjectively useful information about the content of experience. It was this kind of thought that led to the rise of behaviorism in the United States.



From these points of view the very project of phenomenology – a systematic investigation of experience – can seem like an impossibility. I try to offer a new way forward. My own view is that experience is something we do and in this I am trying to offer a way of thinking about what experience is that isn't vulnerable to Sartre's worry or to G. E. Moore's worry about transparency, or to the familiar worries we have about the nature of introspection. The problem of describing experience is not that of describing what is going on inside us in a private domain. It is about describing what we do! And there is nothing ineffable, or magical, or hidden about what we do, about the way we carry on.

Indeed, we actually have something like a cultivated practice for thinking about and describing what we do. And that's aesthetics. When I go to the theatre and I watch a performance, I watch something in real time, something that has a beginning, a middle and an end, and that I need to make sense of in a real time. The aesthetic challenge, when I encounter a performance, is a good model for we need to do when we are trying to understand our own experience.

So am I an externalist phenomenologist? Well, yes, it makes sense to say that at certain point of time, because I'm responding negatively to the internalists, that is the people who think that you can give individualistic, internalistic explanation of human life and I draw heavily on insights cleaned from phenomenological tradition, and I believe in experience. On the other hand, once I've cleared, once we collectively have cleared, the philosophical culture of the assumption of the internalism, I would actually prefer not to say that I'm an externalist.

**How has your approach developed from the article a *sensorimotor account of vision...*<sup>1</sup> (with K. O'Regan) to book *Out of our heads*<sup>2</sup>? Are there any major corrections, revisions or even turns?**

There were many things at the time that I think O'Regan and I didn't agree about entirely. But I don't know if they were clear to me at the time, or clear to him. We had a job to do so we tried to ignore certain differences. But they do show up in the text. I write things and then I go on, so I haven't actually gone back and looked at that text since before it was published; I have moved on. But what I can say is that one area of tension between me and Kevin concerns the idea that experience might be illusory. Kevin, I think, always liked the idea that since there are no representations in the head, since we don't represent the world in detail all at once in a model in the head, since the world is only there in some sense, *potentially*, thanks to the things I can do, through the movements I can make, and through the sensorimotor mastery I possess, that in some sense our visual experience is an illusion. And this is what he

<sup>1</sup> O'Regan, J. K., Noë, A. 2001. a sensorimotor account of vision and visual consciousness. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 24: 939-1031.

<sup>2</sup> Noë, A. 2010. *Out of our heads*. New York: Hill and Wang.

said in his wonderful 1992 article on the world as an external memory. And in drafts of our paper together this is what he wanted to say. But for me in some ways it is my 'Grundgedanke' that experience is *not* illusory. What we were giving an account of, is not why experience is illusory but how we ought to understand experience. In my current work I talk of presence. One of the features of all the essays I've written since *Action in Perception*<sup>3</sup> is that I emphasize the notion of presence, and presence is... presence is availability, presence is skilful access. What is an illusion is the idea that there are some other kind of presence that consists in having the world beautifully represented in one's head. Now it's somewhat ironic, because there's an exchange between Daniel Dennett's<sup>4</sup> and us in the commentary section of the BBS paper, where Dennett's response addresses this very point – he wants to insist that change blindness shows that visual consciousness is grand illusion and we argue – really I argue – that's not right. But that battle continued I think between me and Kevin. And I went on to then edit the book for *The Journal of Consciousness Studies*, a special issue for *The Journal of Consciousness Studies* called *Is the visual world a grand illusion?*<sup>5</sup> about this very issue, whether or not we can accuse ordinary phenomenology of having some kind of false conception of its own character. Dennett says: when it comes to experience, everything is the matter of theoretical presupposition, and that ordinary perceivers have a theoretical idea that seeing is picture-like, for example. So when we teach them that it's not picture-like, we're showing them that they were mistaken about the character of their own experience. My own view – and this is also something I have written about with Evan Thompson – is that it's very much a mistake that we foist on unsuspecting ordinary people.

A further, related matter of potential difference between me and O'Regan actually concerns the question of externalism. Here I need to be very cautious because I'm interpreting now; I'm not remembering specific conversations. I think part of what drives my conviction that our potential experience is not illusory, even if it functions as the enactive or sensorimotor view would have it, is the idea that the world plays a very important role in the story. It's not just my exercising sensorimotor knowledge, it is my being enabled to exercise sensorimotor knowledge. I act and the world acts back. And I am thus engaged in dynamic exchange or transaction with the world. Now it's very difficult to make that convincing. That, if you like, is the burden of externalist. But that's one of the ideas that I think I was already interested in the 2001 article, and that has certainly preoccupied me since then, especially since the publication of *Action in Perception*. And that is very much the focus in my new book *Varieties of Presence*<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Noë, A. 2005. *Action in perception*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

<sup>4</sup> Dennett, D. C. 2001. Surprise, surprise. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 24: 982.

<sup>5</sup> Noë, A. 2002. Red. *Is the visual world a grand illusion?* Thorverton: Imprint Academic.

<sup>6</sup> Noë, A. 2011 (forthcoming). *Varieties of presence*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

In the commentary on our BBS piece, Andy Clark<sup>7</sup> challenged us, with worries about a ping-pong-playing robot. If such a robot had the sensorimotor knowledge, do we want to actually commit ourselves to the idea that it also has consciousness? And we said: yes, absolutely! You give it the sensorimotor knowledge and we'll grant that it has consciousness. What we were appealing to there is the fact that it was widely believed at that time, and I think many people still believe it, that basically know how to give a good naturalistic account of cognition. Cognition, after all, we can give a good functionalist account of cognition. The puzzling problem is consciousness. It is consciousness after all that seems to seep through the web of functional relations. The challenge is consciousness, not cognition. Now what Kevin and I argued is that if we can take knowledge for granted – sensorimotor knowledge – then we can build up an account of consciousness on that basis. That's what we tried to do in that paper.

Now, where I think Kevin and I may disagree is whether in fact it really is possible to give a functional account of cognition, or on whether would really be any easier to do that than to give an account of our experiential states. I am robustly skeptical about that. I think this big distinction people make between problems of consciousness and problems of intentionality is misguided. We don't understand human thought and reasoning either! These are just as mysterious as consciousness. So I don't actually think we can take the idea of sensorimotor knowledge for granted. So what that means is that I think there are limits to the reductive power of the sensorimotor approach.

In *Action in Perception* and in *Out of our heads* – and this is the move which was first made by Francisco Varela and has been developed by Evan Thompson – I suggested that we need to recognize that problems of mind and problems of life are really one. We can explain consciousness in terms of sensorimotor knowledge, but we can't give an account of sensorimotor knowledge that does not already take consciousness for granted, at least to some degree. So we need to look further for the account of consciousness. And the place to look is biology. I believe that if you give me a living being we can explain beautifully, in the sorts of ways that Kevin and I talked about, why some of its processes are visual and some of its processes are tactile. But if you give me some robotic equipment – we can't.

**In the article *Are There Neural Correlates of Consciousness?*<sup>8</sup> you and Evan Thompson have written: 'The moral to be drawn is that neuroscience, far from having freed itself of philosophy, needs the help of philosophy now more than ever'. Is that the truth indeed? In your opinion, do philosophy and the sciences need cooperation only, or also fruitful opposition, sometimes?**

<sup>7</sup> Clark, A. & Toribio, J. 2001. Sensorimotor Chauvinism? *Behavioral And Brain Sciences*, 24: 979-980.

<sup>8</sup> Noë, A. & Thompson, E. 2004. Are there neural correlates of consciousness. *Journal of Consciousness studies*, 11(1): 3-28.

Well, the point that Evan and I made – I make again in *Out of our heads* – was this: scientists take a lot of stuff for granted when they study perception, consciousness, memory and so on. If they are going to investigate these phenomena productively, they had better pay attention to the things they're taking for granted. And so they do need help from philosophers. One of the idea that's very important to me, I believe I said this in *Action in Perception*, and I remember that made some of my teachers very angry, is that philosophical problems are not the private property of philosophers. They arise often, and they arise in different spaces, they arise anywhere – they arise in art and they arise in politics, they arise in physics, and they arise in economics, and in biology, and of course they arise in psychology and psychiatry, and neuroscience. Now, most scientist are really alert to this fact and I think there really is the appreciation that they can enrich their own understanding by recognizing the opportunities and values of philosophy for what they're doing. And this is very much been my experience. I find that the audience that is most receptive to the ideas that I developed with Kevin and Evan in *Action in Perception*, and later with Susan Hurley, are working scientists. They love them. They're excited by the possibilities that the philosophical questions open up for them.

So I do think that there is this room for collaboration and of course it goes both ways. The papers that Susan Hurley and I wrote together on synaesthesia and on neural plasticity – we could not have written, we could not even framed it as we did, if we hadn't immersed ourselves in the science. These papers grow out of the science. So that's first part of my answer to you.

Now, I also take your point: maybe there is a philosophical mission, a philosophical calling that goes beyond working with natural science. And in fact I agree. I don't think that philosopher's job is to criticize science; philosophy has radically different job than natural science. One of the ideas that I'm developing in the book I'm now writing is that philosophy's mission is essentially the same as art's mission, and that philosophy is actually an aesthetic practice, just as art is, really, a philosophical practice – or at least it can be and ought to be – and that in both cases, with art and philosophy, we are enabled to achieve a certain kind of... this may not be quite the right word, but I'll use it now – a sort of *understanding*, an understanding of where we are in relation to our lives, or our ways of thinking, or knowing, or perceiving... That's uniquely the job of philosophy and art to deliver. So I appreciate the reminder implicit in your question that one doesn't want to always make the work of natural science and the work of philosophy too cosy.

**Robert D. Rupert in his last work: *Cognitive Systems and the Extended Mind*<sup>9</sup> criticizes stressing the contribution of the environment and the nonneural body**

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<sup>9</sup> Rupert, R. D. 2009. *Cognitive Systems and the Extended Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**to human thought. He demands to appreciate classical positions in cognitive science. What's your opinion on that?**

I have read Rupert's book, but I do not have it fresh in mind. I read it before it was published, so correct me if I misdescribe it. My basic worry about his view is that it adheres too closely to a certain kind of functionalism according to which you can abstractly characterize cognitive systems as, for example information processing system, and that then you can, coordinated with this abstraction, draw distinctions between what is more or less essential to the system and its operation. On that view it turns out that the cognitive system thought of as inhering in the organism has a basicness and fundamentalness as compared to the cognitive system thought of as extended and extending into the environment. He can then talk about how the use of implement has a slower processing time than the exercise of internally realized cognitive structures. One of the most interesting cases, for me – and this is something I'm starting to write about – is the case of language. I discussed this a little in *Out of our heads*. What is language? Is language internal? Is language external? Is language a condition of my exercise of skill or is it actually constituted by those skills? Is it the part of the mechanisms of cognition or is it nearly part of environmental conditions that enable me to cognize? I don't believe we can draw this lines sharply or that we can draw them once and for all. I don't believe there is any need to draw this lines sharply. One of the things we as human beings do is develop technologies that are continuously manipulating our border between what is environment and what is self. And we do that not only sometimes; we do that and have always done that, it's part of our biology to do that. Take the case of architecture. One way of thinking of what the building is, is that building is a constraint on possible movements. I can only move in certain ways in a constructed space – if I want to go upstairs I need to go up the stairs and if I want to go up the stairs I need to use my body in a certain way. So there is a way in which the building controls me. Of course, if there was no building there would be no upstairs so I couldn't go upstairs, I couldn't even want to go upstairs. So in some sense the building enables me – it both enables me and controls or disables me. Now, if we want to understand the life that I lead in certain building – maybe I live there, maybe I work there, maybe I'm just going to the doctor's office there – if I want to understand what I'm able to do, what my capacities are, can we really hope to give an understanding of that which doesn't recognize the constitutive role being played by the building, by architecture, by environment? Now here the interesting thing about this sort of environment is that is man-made. But that brings out a deep feature of all animal life. Animals alter the environment by living. We make the mess, we eat, we excrete, we alter the world we live in, we change the environment we depend on to do the things we do. – So where is the boundary between what is environment and what is the cognitive system? We can't draw this line sharply, and we shouldn't want to. So I think Rupert has good arguments, but they're very cautious, and very reactive and conservative. Rupert is responding to Chalmers and



Clark<sup>10</sup>, and Chalmers and Clark take functionalism, at least about most aspects of cognition, for granted. Chalmers's and Clark's paper is magnificent essay, because everything is in it already. I admire this paper a lot. To respond to Rupert Chalmers and Clark said: look, what it is for something to be a belief-based memory is for it to be acquired in a certain way, and for one to have a certain kind of quick and ready access to it. In other words, for one to have the access to it, which allows it to be integrated in the flow of life. What Rupert points out is that, as a matter of fact, artificial systems are rarely integrated in that way and that, if you like, is an empirical point, not a conceptual point, and there is no question that your relationship to a notebook in your pocket or to your iPod or to your walking stick is different from one's relation to one's own feet or legs or hands or brain. The question is whether it is important conceptually and I don't think Rupert is giving us reason to believe it is.

**Have you got any attitude to enactive social cognition, and to status of social interactions in explanation of cognition? For example: McGann and De Jaegher<sup>11</sup> propose to examine social perception as the kind of mastery of social skills – in analogy to your and O'Regan's sensorimotor approach to perception.**

I don't have a good answer to it, just because I'm really not that familiar with this literature, I haven't read McGann and De Jaegher. However I have some sympathy to the general project. The question I'm asking myself is *how does the world show up?*, and the answer that I give is that we *achieve* access to it, and that the way it shows up is as available. And how things show up, how they're available, depends in different ways on what we do and what we can do. If I have money in my pocket then the food on the restaurant's menu is available to me. If I don't have money in my pocket, the food is not available to me. If I can read, the meaning of the text is available to me, and if I can't read it is not available to me. Can I look at you and understand what you are doing? You are reaching for a cup and I see that you are taking a sip of water or you reach for the cup, the very same movement, and I see that you're putting the cup away. You've washed it now and it's clean, and it goes back to the cupboard. I am sensitive to different kinds of action, differences in taking a sip and putting the cup away show up for me. That kind of perceptual knowledge is also a kind of social knowledge. My idea would be that in principle the availability of the meaning of the text, the availability of the back of the tomato, and the availability of the meaning of your gestures can all be understood in terms of this *presence as access* idea. So I would be strongly in agreement with anybody who thought you could in detailed way extend this kinds of idea to social cognition.

<sup>10</sup> Clark, A. & Chalmers, D. 1998. The Extended Mind. *Analysis*, 58(1): 7-19.

<sup>11</sup> McGann, M., & De Jaegher, H. 2009. Self-Other Contingencies: Enacting Social Perception. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 8(4): 417-437.

**In Action in Perception you write about two kinds of actions. One kind is bodily action, connected to sensorimotor dependencies, and there is also another kind of action – something like thought actions. They are both crucial for the content of experience. How would you localize then your account in debates about conceptual vs nonconceptual views on the conscious experience’s content including the role of thought action?**

Thank you for that question. At the time I wrote *Action in Perception* I viewed myself as very strongly conceptualist. I believed that one does need conceptual knowledge to have experience. And the proposal I made in the book, and this is mostly developed in chapter 6, is that we should realize that concepts are themselves – or I’ll put it like this – sensorimotor skills are themselves a kind of primitive concept. So what I tried to do was to advance a way of thinking about concepts, which is, if you like, not very intellectual, a deflationary way of thinking of what concept is. So that there was a way of thinking about experience as conceptual and yet as entirely within reach of animal life more broadly, not only human life. In my newer work – in *Varieties of Presence* – I’m really clear that what I really want to say is that the problem of the world’s presence, whether in experience or thought, is a problem about our access to the world; on this view, the difference between visual access and tactile access and auditory access is like the difference between perceptual access and thought access. That is to say, thought differs from perception as different modalities of access and this is a development of the view in *Action in Perception*, although it wasn’t stated there in that form. On this view a concept is just a *skill of access* (which is just what a sensorimotor skill is). a concept is a tool – or technique rather – for achieving access. And one of the reasons why this idea is important is that it allows us to appreciate that not every use of a concept is the application of the concept *in judgement*. You may have thought that if I see a cup, what really is happening is that I am seeing something and categorizing it as a cup. But the view I want to propose is that seeing the cup is being able to achieve access to a cup. And being able to achieve access to a cup presupposes certain skills, among others knowing what the cup is, or knowing how to pick up a cup. So I compare a concept to a tool for picking something up rather than a label or a tag you put on a thing. And on this way of thinking about it, there still is a distinction that we can make between perception and thought. But it’s no longer a sharp distinction nor a theoretically fundamental distinction, for every act of thought is a kind of achievement of access to the world and so in a sense it’s a kind of extended perception, and every act of perception is thoughtful grappling with the world.

**Sometimes when one is talking about enactivism more traditional thinkers may say something like that ‘The same was told by Aristotle’ or ‘I can’t see any differences between enactivism and behaviorism’. How would you reply to such statements?**

It's interesting, the same thing always happened to Wittgenstein, people would say: 'your view is really just pragmatism, or logical positivism', and that's one reaction that people have to views, to try to link it to what they know – and that's probably a pretty healthy reaction. In this case, I think that the linking to behaviorism is a legitimate one. Ned Block<sup>12</sup> in his commentary on me and O'Regan wrote that our view was behaviorism. He said this is clearly just a new version of behaviorism, he insisted that experience can vary even if sensorimotor content stays the same. Ned Block later realized he made a mistake but it was his response to what he was reading. I want to acknowledge that there is a point to the idea that our view is like behaviorism; that's not a foolish comment. But we need to get clearer what we mean by behaviorism. Do you mean logical behaviorism?, do you mean Gilbert Ryle?, do you mean Hempel?, do you mean the sort of ideas that the Vienna Circle has developed? Do you mean what the American experimental psychologists believed in? Once you ask these questions it should become clear that the kind of view we advanced is not all like these other views – the one closest kinship would be Ryle – but it's not like these other views because we take for granted the notion of knowledge, skill, understanding. For me mere behavior is not an operative category. Or mere movement. Ultimately I'm interested in meaning in the domain of movement and action, in exploration, in investigation. And the thought is that when I see, I am investigating the world, I am making use of understanding I have about how my interaction with the world changes my relation to the world. And I am therefore not reducing this rich field of consciousness to mere behavior. I'm showing that there has been traditionally a false segregation of movement and action from our so called 'inner lives', and that the inner-outer boundary no longer can be the one that interests us. So in *Out of our heads* I say: consciousness is not something that happens in us, it is something we do. I don't say it's a logical construction of behavior. I say we perform or enact our consciousness – we do so in the environment, in context, with history, with background knowledge. It's not consciousness ex nihilo, it's the performance of activities, practices. So one of the ways in which there is a difference to behaviorism is that I think that I am not committed to a reduction to behavior. I'm not trying to reduce our conscious life to meaningless behavior. One interesting question is to what extent the kind of analysis that I offer of our perceptual experience is driven by a priori conceptual considerations. And to what extent are they empirical. Something that I like to think about the view is that it has an empirical plausibility; you can try to design experiments for testing it. But at the same time I like to say it has phenomenological adequacy. And this is where I think conceptual analysis enters into my own work. I do think that there are – under some interpretations of the meaning of this word – a priori elements in this idea that experience is something we do. That world is available to you, that it is there, that you can turn your head and move your body, reach out and in this way obtain access to what there is. And what it means to say that I experience a whole visual scene is that I have now access to whole visual scene thanks to my skilful and

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<sup>12</sup> Block, N. 2001. Behaviorism revisited. *Behavioral And Brain Sciences*, 24: 977-978.

bodied presence in the scene. And insofar as I am saying something that has aprioristic qualities to it, I think it's legitimate to compare that to logical behaviorism, to the sort of ideas that Ryle articulated so well. I don't want to be dramatic on this point, but I think there is much truth in behaviorism. Behaviorism was overthrown by serious advances both in cognitive science and outside of cognitive science. And the way it was overthrown in cognitive science – primarily through the cognitive revolution, associated with for example Noam Chomsky – is I think one bad thing was replaced by another. And I think that the debates still needs to go on. But let me just put it this way: I reject the behaviorism, I reject the reductionism of behaviorism. I think that there are insights that some of the great behaviorism thinkers like Gilbert Ryle had that have been forgotten and need to be recalled. And I am always in my work – in the back of the work – in dialogue with that tradition. They didn't get it right – you cannot reduce minds to behavior, I don't believe you can do that. But you also cannot reduce mind to brain. Mind is neither brain nor behavior. What I've been trying to do in my work is articulate the way of thinking about mind, that does justice to the fact that although mind is not behavior, mind is related to behavior, and although mind is not brain, mind depends on brain (as well as on the body and world). This is really what my work is about.

Now, Aristotle... I guess I'm not enough an expert on Aristotle, to know whether it might be true that he did say it all before we did, so I have to pass on that one. I certainly wouldn't be embarrassed to be told that that is so. Surely Aristotle is an important source for views like mine. Aristotle was a philosopher who recognized the category of skill, of practical ability, and the kind of intelligence is exhibited in mastery of a *techné*, and the notion of the achievement of excellences in connection with practical knowledge. It's important reference point in my work.

**We have taken realizing the project of popularization new philosophy embedded in the interdisciplinary context – mainly enactivism, which is also a new kind of talking about the philosophical and scientific problems. This project is named: Enactive Jam Session – because we want to bring near our ideas by home realms, like music. Do you think it is backbreaking?**

Yes, that's a very suggestive idea. I don't know enough about what you concretely have in mind, to comment in much detail, but I can say that in the last two years I have begun collaborating directly with artists. And in fact last month – and this will come shocking news, I'm sure – I actually performed in a theatrical performance piece that I also co-wrote, at a theatre in Frankfurt, Germany. It was my first theatrical premiere and I did so in conviction that the work of the artist is philosophical work, that my work has, at least potentially artistic value. And so I collaborated with a dancer at this festival in Frankfurt in a performance we named 'What we know best'. I plan to develop that. I now collaborate in an ongoing way with a dance company in Germany, and acting and investigating with them such questions as how

choreography can be a philosophical practice, how it can be a practice that can tribute to scientific knowledge, how can the work of science, philosophy and cognitive science inform. Interestingly I find that there is tremendous excitement about this, both in the art world and in the public. I gave a workshop recently in Germany, with my dancer collaborator Nicole Peisl, where the participants in the workshop were both theoreticians and artists. Frankfurter *Allgemeine Zeitung* did a nice article about the workshop. They were intrigued by this idea that a philosopher has something to learn from a dancer and that a dancer has something to learn from philosopher. – You talk about improvisational music. Music is for me the hardest, most difficult case because the language of music is so highly abstract, if one can even think of it as a language. But my conviction would be that music would also provide a setting for an acting, or for that matter it could be philosophical setting in which one enacts. So I'm very supportive of your idea, I'd like to know more about what your jam sessions look like.

**Thank you for your answers!**

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